1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

other African traits, which, though essentially utilitarian in Africa, also allow play for the æsthetic impulse, have been lost as well. Ironworking is absent not only because the necessary deposits of iron ore are lacking, but because the technique of shaping the metal into various forms, which in Africa is in the hands of specialists, was apparently suppressed in the time of slavery. No native cloth is woven. Basketry has survived, but whereas in Africa designs of no small artistic merit are achieved in this medium, it is markedly utilitarian in Haiti. Even from a technical point of view, the basketry forms are of the simplest, the panniers used for transportation of products on mule-back being merely an in-and-out weave, and the plaited strips of which hats and the *macoute*, or carrying basket, are made are of a parallel simplicity.

Few African recreational forms have survived. *Wari*, the draughts-like West African game found today in many parts of the West Indies, is unknown in the interior of Haiti, though it has been introduced into Port-au-Prince, where it is played by longshoremen who have learned it from the sailors of near-by islands. String figures, important in West Africa, are not encountered, and no children's pursuits comparable to the play of young Africans were seen in Mirebalais, if the minor ceremony of marking the loss of childhood teeth be excepted. African types of recreation have in the main given way to cock-fights and card-games, both of which derive their interest from the opportunities they offer for gambling—a fact important in itself, since gambling is not one of the widespread African vices. The most important card-games are *trois-sept*, *mariage*, and *bezique*, and both men and women know them and play them for stakes. Similarly cock-fighting, particularly during the dry season, is a passionate avocation of the men. Large sums are wagered on the results of an encounter, and feeling often runs high.[6]

The Haitian genius for art and recreation is best embodied in the dance and its accompanying songs and drum rhythms. Virtuosity is attained not only by the dancers, but even more

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42. *Forged iron "saber" of the loa Damballa, from a hounfor near Léogane. Height, 32 inches.*

43. *Forged iron standard for holding ritual objects, from a hounfor in the region of Léogane. Height, 18 inches.*

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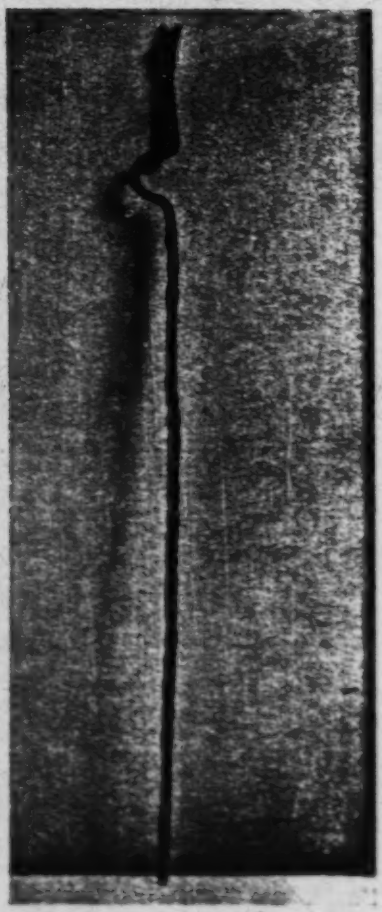
44. *Ancient iron figure of the loa Quinçon Fer, from a hounfor near Léogane. Height, 12 inches.*

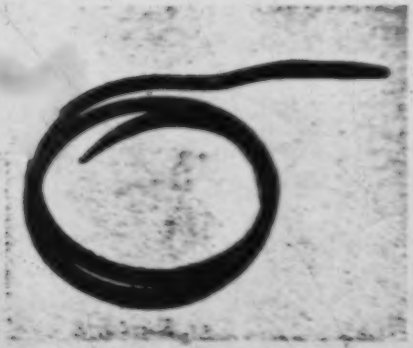
45. *Old iron ritual bell, or ogan, from a hounfor in southern Haiti. Height, 11 inches.*



46. *Forged iron rod in the stylized form of a snake, representing the loa Damballa, from southern Haiti. Height, 34 inches.*

47. *Iron sculpture on a Nago altar of a hounfor near Gonaives, representing a bird sitting on a tree.*

48. *A sculptured iron standard in a hounfor in the Cul-de-Sac Plain.*



49. *Forged snake, representing Damballa, from southern Haiti. Length in coiled form, 9 inches.*

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
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50. *Representation of the loa La Sirène, made by a contemporary blacksmith.*

51. *Representation of the loa St. Jacques by the same blacksmith.*

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10. The Arts– Flour, Wood, and Iron

It is the nonmaterial arts and traditions that have thrived best in Haiti through the years of slavery, political unrest, and poverty. Religious concepts, music, dancing, folk tales, proverbs, and games are found everywhere in profusion. Material arts of the past have fared less well. Today, nothing is left of the old African knowledge of wood carving, metal casting, appliqué work, and weaving. Why such major African arts have died out in Haiti is no mystery. They disappeared simply because there was no place for them under the slave system or in the new Haitian society which followed it.

Under the colonial masters, the demands made on the New World African were for coffee, cotton, and indigo. His creative talents were channeled into carpentry, masonry, and the building of facilities for production. There were no traditional artistic outlets or patrons for the wood carver, and no need for the weaver. Nor, during the years of slavery, was there much leisure for the craftsman to do his work even for the fun of it, should he be so inclined; indeed, this approach to wood carving or any other art would have been little understood or appreciated by most West Africans. A man who made an art object purely and simply to express a creative urge rather than to fill an express need would have been regarded as slightly eccentric. The old West African wood carvings with which we are now familiar were made because they were *required* for some purpose. A figure of a deity was needed in a shrine, a carved protective guard was needed for the household, a grave marker or a ceremonial mask was obligatory.

In Haiti the needs of those who ruled were different. The slave with knowledge of the forge was not put to work making spears, ceremonial axes, and the like; he was assigned the task of making grillwork for houses, hinges and bolts, iron tires for coach wheels, and metal parts for the sugar mills. The anonymous African ironworker did his job well.

2: Courlander B-L (1827-1855) 1960 SV3 Hai1 SV3

And when the revolution came he produced for the Haitian armies knives, gun parts, and wheels to transport cannon. By the tens of thousands he made ingeniously devised metal objects to be thrown on the roads, before the French cavalry troops—objects so shaped that, no matter how they fell, a single sharp point stood erect to cripple the enemy horses. Yet knowledge of the West African uses of iron did not altogether disappear, and during the first century of independence the Haitian blacksmith created many old-style knives, spears, and ritual objects for the cult temple.

Even today, some of this old-style work is to be found in hounfors in the southwestern peninsula. One may see simple or ornate iron standards, made to support ceremonial offerings or candles, strikingly similar to standards in ancestral shrines in Dahomey. There are iron bells, both single and double, made in pure West African style; ornate ritual swords and sabers which are the *vevés* of certain deities; coiled and uncoiled iron serpents representing the gods Damballa and Ayida; and stylized or semirealistic portraits of the deities. Many of these old pieces are nineteenth-century survivals; others have been forged within the past decade. [1]

An over-all impression of Haitian material culture is that artistic decoration is almost entirely absent and that the prime emphasis is on utility. Wooden cooking spoons are efficient in form, but missing from them is the delicate decorative carving often found in West Africa. The long wooden washing bowl, or *gamelle*, and the wooden mortar in which grain is pulverized are likewise clean-cut but stark and plainly utilitarian. Clay bowls, bottles, and storage jars are usually of simple, uniform design, with only accidental variations; there is little use of glazes, and the clay is often heavy and thick. Should there be a water gourd-bowl in the peasant hut, the chances are that it is roughly made, without legs or carved designs. Dugout canoes are usually crude in appearance, heavy and thick-walled, and irregular in form.

Yet there are many evidences—though one must seek them out—that esthetic impulses are quite alive. The gay peasant straw knapsack, or *sifflet*, without which no mountain man makes a journey, has a charm and grace that is not diminished by familiarity and cheapness. Decorated with dyed braid and tassels, and colored with green and magenta dyes, each *sifflet* on close inspection appears to be unique. In some communities in the south and southwest, burlap squares also are painted with these traditional dyes. About forty inches across, and made of sugar bags, these paintings swarm with geometric patterns and sometimes with figures of flowers and animals. They are purely decorative, being

[1] [See plates 42-51, pp. 112-DD—112-FF.—Ed.]

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
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any usual measure. But Haitians do produce by traditional craft methods a surprisingly large number of the articles they need for daily life. In the countryside it is possible to see many persons engaged, mostly on a part-time basis, in craft activities and home industry that have their roots in the prerevolutionary era. Leatherworkers operating small, crude tanneries still flourish. Charcoal-burners, and operators of small lime kilns that produce building material, are found in every village. Smiths make and repair simple tools, working with forges of archaic design. Combs are made from cows' horns and tortoiseshell, buttons from bone; carrying-bags, fish traps, and a wide variety of baskets from withes, bamboo strips, and grasses; wooden bowls, mortars and pestles, tool handles and spoons from local woods; dippers, pots, and candelabra from tin cans; and sandals from tires and inner tubes. Sawyers cut and dress timber; cabinetmakers still manufacture simple furniture of traditional design from the fast-disappearing tropical woods; many women, working either with the simplest sorts of sewing machines or by hand, make clothing for use and for sale. Along the coasts there are dugout-makers, shipbuilders, and sail- and seine-makers. Simple mattresses, fabricated from local grasses, are sold in every large marketplace, as are crude ceramic wares made by local potters. At the start of the twentieth century, Italian immigrants brought a sturdy tradition of cobbling to Haiti, which has been destroyed only recently by the flood of American imported shoes with their attached prestige, until recently, *ritalo* was a colloquial term for shoe, coming from the name of the most famous of these Italian cobblers.

One of the striking features of Haiti's craft traditions is its relative stability since the revolution. It was under slavery that Haitians first became "westernized," learning what were then standard French craft practices, adjusted to local colonial conditions, probably with some modifying features coming from the African past. It was before the revolution that the Haitian people learned and stabilized their consumer tastes, agricultural and craft standards, and work procedures. Such preferences and standards were worked out primarily in terms of the demands of the plantation regime itself; but even the most repressive social system leaves some opportunity for acculturation. Today's sugar-making shops and rural rum distilleries employ techniques centuries old and little modified over time. Housebuilding and woodworking techniques in the countryside are substantially